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BROAD STREET, 1642  
From "Historic New York." Copyright G. P. Putnam's Sons

## STUDIES OF ART IN AMERICAN LIFE—II

### KNICKERBOCKER DAYS

From the time of the earliest settlement in New Netherlands down to the war of the Revolution, no phase of American life was more picturesque than that of the Knickerbockers. While Dutch sovereignty extended over a period of less than fifty years, Dutch manners and customs left an impress that a century of English rule could not remove. When New Amsterdam became New York and Beverswyck Albany, it was a change of letter and little else. The English crown was added to the arms of the colony, but the Dutch beaver was not displaced, and the loyal Hollanders still sang *Boren Orange*. Nine years later, in the spring of 1673, the Dutch recaptured their territory, but after a brief twelve months it passed again into the hands of the English, where it remained until Great Britain lost all her American possessions.

Life in New Netherlands differed essentially from life in New England. During the seventeenth century the struggle for existence was paramount with most of the Puritans. The winters of Massachusetts were severer than those of Manhattan and the Indians more menacing. But the chief difference between the Puritans and the Dutch lay in their motives for seeking America. The Dutch came to colonize; the Puritans, for religious freedom; the Dutch to found a

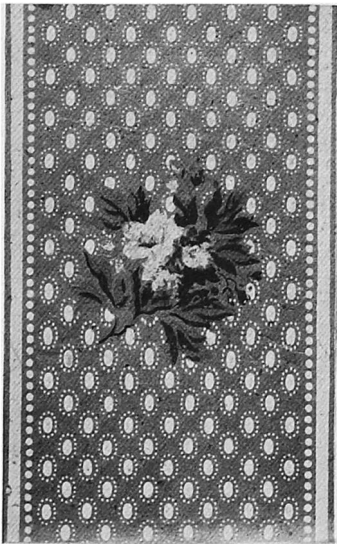
trading post in the interests of the West India Company; the Puritans, that their children might escape the divine right of kings. The Dutch, accustomed to organizing plantations in the eastern hemisphere, were equipped with the necessities for starting one in the western world. From the first the privations endured by the Puritans were unknown to them. Their genius for commerce, coupled with their knowledge of seamanship, robbed the long voyage across the Atlantic of half its terrors. This kept them in touch with the mother country. Soon returning vessels brought back Holland bricks and tiles and household furnishings, and in a few years New Amsterdam was Old Amsterdam in miniature.



DELFT PLATE—ORANGE AND BLUE  
Showing Chinese Influence

Madame Knight, a Massachusetts traveler visiting the Dutch colony, has made us her debtor. She writes vividly in her journal: "The buildings are Brick Generally, very Stately and High, though not like ours in Boston. The Bricks in some of the Houses are of divers Coullers and laid in Checkers, being glazed look very Agreeable. The inside of them is neat to Admiration."

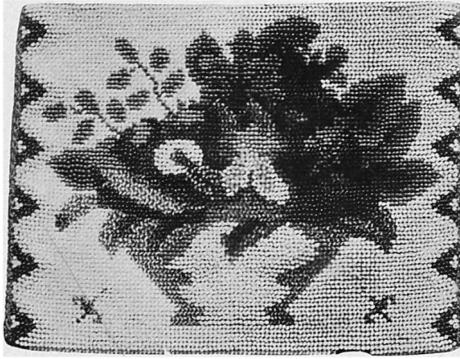
These were the houses of the town. The farmhouses, or boweries, were built of wood, with gambrel roofs and huge brick chimneys. They were unlike the New England houses of similar construction inasmuch as there was a stoep, a greater projection of roof, and a broader foundation. With the rich, the bowerie was simply a country-house, occupied by the family in summer, and where the town table could be supplied the rest of the year with the products of the garden and the dairy. Here



WALL PAPER  
From Old Dutch House on Long Island

took place the spinning of linen, the making of lace, the distilling of perfumes, and many other household arts for which the Dutch women were famous.

Both dwellings were picturesque, and as the colonists reproduced

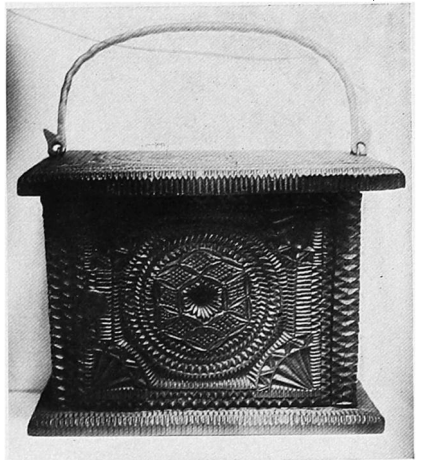


BEAD BAG

the interiors of their Holland homes as faithfully as was possible in a new land, there was much comfort and homeliness within. The walls of the parlor were decorated, but the other rooms were plastered and the big oak beams overhead left exposed. The living-room, serving sometimes as a dining-room, had a great fireplace ornamented with Delft tiles. The blaze on

this wide hearth was full of cheer and in the long evenings lighted up the remote corners.

Across the chimney-breast, and in the shadow of a huge hood of iron, was a narrow shelf holding candlesticks and the family hour-glass. The plastered walls were not devoid of color, for the housewife kept her Delft plates in oak racks, where they vied in brightness with the pots of tulips set in stiff rows on the window-ledges. Delft potters in the seventeenth century were largely influenced by Chinese designs, and the plates showed a variety of color unknown in the later ware. Delft, from the beginning, resembled Oriental faience. It was light in weight, and the hard glaze was a bluish white. Delft was imported



DUTCH FOOT-STOVE

Courtesy of Mrs. R. M. McCreery



A BELLE OF NEW AMSTERDAM  
Enlarged from an Old Print

by the Dutch settlers in great quantities until late in the eighteenth century. Johannes Van Brugh gave as a wedding present to his daughter Katherine, when she married Philip Livingstone, a complete dinner-set of Delft, and Lisbeth de Peyster in her will directed that special care be taken of her Delft teapots.

Had the pieces used by the colonists been preserved, the progress and decline of Delft pottery would have been chronicled. The Delft of early New Amsterdam had a touch of orange in it out of compliment to the House of Orange. The designs were often grotesque. Scriptural subjects were popular, but scenes in which Chinese pagodas and Holland dikes were placed side by side were more common. The red in the plates was borrowed from the Japanese. When the Holland trade with Japan was at its height the Dutch ware closely resembled the fine porcelain of that country.

This gave the pottery great prestige. The idea of depicting their own scenery pure and simple—the windmills and canals—came as a later thought to the Delft potters, and by that time English china was in the market and the demand for the Dutch ware was over.

In the New Amsterdam interior pewter played a prominent part. The high cupboards were filled with tankards, flagons, beekers,



SARAH VAN BROUGH LIVINGSTONE  
Copied by Huntington from Miniature

bowls, and porringers, the latter hanging by their beaten handles in precise rows. Proud was the *Vrouw* of her pewter; prouder of her silver. This was not exposed to the view of any chance visitor. Hidden away in a heavy oak chest were the precious pieces—treasured heirlooms handed down from one generation to another.

This collection slowly increased, for the members of the family were encouraged to put their earnings into silver. The money thus saved was called "silver money," and was sent to Holland when a



THE BOAR-HUNT  
Brass Panel from Oak Chest

favorable occasion presented itself. Into the hands of some trustworthy sea-captain it was given, and after many months the little heap of coins returned in the guise of a beaker, a sugar-box, or—perhaps a coffee-urn. Then it was carefully wrapped and put away in the chest, entered in an inventory, and mentioned later in a will, but not brought forth, except to grace a christening or a wedding.

Some of these chests were beautifully carved, others were mounted with iron; occasionally they were paneled in brass. These panels usually depicted religious subjects—"Mordecai at the Gate," "Judith and Holofernes," "Daniel in the Den of Lions." Two old panels that have survived their oak setting represent a boar-hunt and a falcon-chase. Dutch metal-workers leaned to the pictorial. Their designs were seldom conventional. But no subject was too small or commonplace to be overlooked by them. Brass milk-cans were things of beauty, copper coffeepots often rivaled silver ones in

graceful outline, and such ungainly articles as warming-pans and foot-stoves were not without ornament.

Nor were all of these imported from the mother country. There were local artisans. An old diary refers to one Jan Van Heer, a famous hammerer of metal, which undoubtedly proves that Jan was the pioneer of the arts and crafts in America. Lanthorns were made at an early date in the colony. These were of horn, as their name indicates, and varied in size from small ones, brass-bound, used by



THE FALCON-CHASE  
Brass Panel from Oak Chest

the housewife, to great iron ones carried by the night-watch—men who paced the streets and cried the hour. Beautiful indeed are some of these old lanthorns, the mellow light apparently slight but far-reaching. Evil-doers fled from their rays and by their soft glow children were rocked to sleep and lovers exchanged vows; for the tallow dip back of the yellow horn gave a stronger light than three candles in their sticks, and Dutch economy even in matters of love was not set aside.

It was a happy household that gathered around the hearth at night; the *Mynheer* with his Holland pipe, the *goede Vrouw* with her needlework, and at her side little Peter and Johannes and Annekje and Tytie, and possibly Rikert and Hendrick and Jan. The tasks of the day were over, and there was a pleasant hour for the children before they were marshaled off to bed. Dutch boys and girls lived a much freer life than their little New England cousins. There were special



merrymakings planned for their benefit, and some of the quaint old letters extant dwell at length on these festivities.

Women in New Netherlands enjoyed a unique position. Among the first Holland dames in the early settlement were Annekje Jans,



FROM OLD PRINTS

Katrina Van Bourgh, Margaret Hardenbroeck, and Cornelia Lubbetse, and to them belongs great honor, for they took an active part in colonial affairs. In the next generation widows managed their estates; wives, in the absence of their husbands, conducted all business affairs; spinsters were successful merchants. Judith Stuyvesant, after the death of the famous governor-general, invested her property so wisely that it doubled during her lifetime; Maria Van Courtlandt

governed Courtlandt Manor for many years to its great prosperity; and Madame Polly Provoost, renowned for her beauty and wit, owned a shop in the busiest thoroughfare of the town—and shared with the governor the distinction of possessing a coach and four.

Picturesque were the maids and matrons of New Amsterdam. The sober garb of the Puritan was not theirs. They reveled in bright hues, and a gathering of Dutch belles rivaled a tulip-garden in wealth of color. Green and scarlet petticoats, bodices of velvet, embroidered aprons and caps were part of the attire. The caps were seldom discarded. Ordinarily they

were fastened with a band of ribbon, but at church and on all formal occasions they were held in place by silver clasps of fine workmanship. Some of these quaint ornaments have been kept until to-day, and are among the many interesting things handed down by the Dutch.

While the life of New Amsterdam was a placid one, it was not without important social events. Christenings and marriages were occasions of mirth and feasting, and holidays were joyfully observed. The Dutch calendar was full of saints' days. Paas and Candlemas were favorites, but Christmas and New Year's day were the great festivals of the year.

In Beverswyck, where lived the patroon, society was more formal and the lines between rich and poor more sharply drawn. Killian Van Rensselaer, first patroon and founder of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, was a governor in the East India Company and a man of vast estates in Holland. He was selected by the reigning prince to represent Dutch interests at the head of the Hudson River. The little colony was independent of the settlement in New Netherlands, and was in reality a small principality in a wilderness. The patroonship remained in the Van Rensselaer family. At the time of the war of the Revolution the eighth patroon surrendered his title, and a unique phase of government passed out of existence. On a smaller scale were the Livingston and Van Courtlandt manors; but as there was something feudal about all three, it is to New Amsterdam that the student of history must turn for a true picture of Dutch colonial life.



PEWTER TANKARD

VIRGINIA HUNTINGTON ROBBE.